



Town of Fairhaven Board of Health

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January 5, 2022

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FAIRHAVEN,
MASS.

PRESENT: Michael Ristuccia, Peter DeTerra, Kevin Gallagher, David Flaherty

Call to Order

- a. Chairman, Michael Ristuccia called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. Roll call attendance of the meeting members were taken, all members were present.

2. Welcome and Media Notification

- a. Mr. Ristuccia welcomed everyone and read the media and recording notifications and welcomed the public to speak on items.

3. Minutes of the Meeting:

- a. Mr. DeTerra made the motion to approve the minutes of the meeting on December 29, 2021. Mr. Gallagher seconded the motion, vote passed.

4. Health Agent Report/ COVID-19 Update

- a. Mr. Flaherty read his report: As of December 30, 2021: Total Case Count: 3,169. Total Tests in the last 2 weeks 2,078. Total cases in the last two weeks: 212. Positivity Rate of 11.31%. Total vaccinated persons in Fairhaven 10,633. Vaccinated Females is 5,811, 71% Per Capita and 54% Proportion. Fully Vaccinated Males is 4,852, 62% Per Capita and 45% Proportion.
- b. Mr. Flaherty also spoke of hospitalizations from COVID in Massachusetts. Currently to January 5, 2021 there are 1,519 persons hospitalized. 441 are in ICU beds and 262 are intubated. The COVID Case count is 4x higher than it was last year at this time and the hospitalization rate is 5% higher.
- c. COVID Testing is at the Senior Center at 229 Huttleston Ave on Wednesdays from 3-5pm.
- d. Vaccinations can be obtained at any pharmacies.
- e. The isolation and quarantine guidance has changed. (ISOLATION) If you test positive, regardless of vaccination status you must stay home for 5 days. If you have no symptoms or the symptoms are resolving after 5 days you can leave your house and continue to wear a mask for an additional 5 days.
(QUARANTINE) If you were exposed to someone who is a confirmed positive and you have been boosted OR completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine within the last 6 months OR completed the primary series of J & J within the last 2 months, wear a mask around others for 10 days and test on day 5 if possible. If you develop symptoms, get a test and stay home.
(QUARANTINE) If you were exposed to someone who is a confirmed positive and you completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not boosted OR completed the primary series of J & J over 2 months ago and are not boosted OR you are unvaccinated, stay home for 5 days, after that continue to wear a mask around others for 5 days. If you cannot quarantine you must wear a mask for 10 days, test on day 5 if possible. If you develop symptoms get a test and stay home.
- f. Community Nurse is assisting with persons who need a Home Bound Vaccine the phone number is 1-833-983-0485.
- g. The next blood pressure clinic is January 12, 2022 from 1-2pm at Town Hall in the Banquet Room.
- h. Mr. Flaherty said he is still working on having a booster clinic to come to Fairhaven and has requested assistance through DPH.

- i. Mr. Flaherty recently went to New Bedford to discuss the shared grant and will have weekly meetings in the coming months.
- j. Mr. Flaherty said there are still chapter 2 complaints that have been coming in, he is working with the Building Department and Elder services to resolve the issues.
- k. The Health Office has had many calls about at home testing kits. Mr. Flaherty said he has applied for them but still has not had a response on them as of yet.
- l. Mr. Gallagher emphasized that there is a lot of behind the testing clinics that people do not see. The testing clinic in Acushnet broke Acushnet yesterday and it was a result as other towns are not taking on the responsibility of testing in their own towns. Acushnet will be modifying testing going forward because of this reason. Mr. Gallagher also mentioned a message from a local physician at Southcoast Health. He read the following, "ICU beds are a thing of the past. Rarely and ICU bed opens up due to a death or someone being moved to the floor. But essentially, there have been no beds for weeks. We frequently call hospitals to try to find an ICU bed. But there are none-anywhere. So, ICU patients board in the Emergency Department, and we are not unique." After Mr. Gallagher read the message from the Southcoast physician, he had said Seekonk had closed all municipal buildings due to COVID, and today in the State there were 16,621 new cases which is a 122% spike since the previous week. The statement of no longer having to wear a mask if you are vaccinated is not true. Mr. Gallagher continued saying he had put together a draft of a mask requirement in public places in Fairhaven. With the numbers as high as they are and ICU where it is at this time the BOH should take the lead. He would like to see the Board consider to have a mask requirement in public places tonight.

Mr. Flaherty said he thinks it is a great idea and now is the time. However, how will the mandate be enforced? The Health Office does not have the capacity and staff. Most people have learned what they need to do but some do not.

Mr. DeTerra said there is a need for this and it needs to be reasonable and enforceable, but questioned who will enforce it. Mr. Ristuccia said the fear is gone in people now. He is also concerned who will do the enforcement. He would like to start with large businesses to strongly recommend masking. Mr. Gallagher said this would be an intermediate step to see how we do with the businesses.

Ms. Sheila Dolan was present via zoom who stated out of a lot of stores she has been in that 8 out of 10 are wearing masks and the mandate is not needed at this moment.

Ms. Smith was via zoom and stated there are a lot of stores with signs up and many are not following it. Our town is close to RI rates and we are very close to having no beds available. She said it's important that the BOH understands the science and that we should go forward with masking. It is not about politics, it is about keeping people safe.

Diane Hahn was present via zoom. She said Stop and Shop employees are getting N95 masks and thinks that the Board of Health has not gone far enough yet and need to go back to masking as well as counting persons at the door.

Mr. Gallagher said he respected everyone's opinion. He said we need a consensus, but would like to have it done voluntarily. Mr. Ristuccia would like to forward this discussion to the next meeting to see the feedback from businesses. Mr. Ristuccia also suggested writing a letter to the government to let them know how upset and concerned they are. Mr. Flaherty said he will make a list and begin going to businesses as soon as possible.

5. Public Comment

- a. None

6. Invoices, Correspondence and Other Business

- a. Bill's and permits are to be signed at the end of the meeting.

7. Next Meeting Date: January 19, 2022 at 5:00pm

- a. Mr. DeTerra made the motion to adjourn at 5:45pm, Mr. Gallagher seconded the motion, vote passed.